

# Center for Excellence in Rural Safety



## SafeRoadMaps

[www.SafeRoadMaps.org](http://www.SafeRoadMaps.org)

### SafeRoadMaps v. 3 released

CERS researchers launched version 3 of SafeRoadMaps (at [SafeRoadMaps.org](http://SafeRoadMaps.org)) in July 2010. The new version includes user-friendly interfaces for travelers, policymakers, and crash analysts. In addition, SafeRoadMaps now contains Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data from all years that contain geo-referencing information, currently 2001 to 2008.

Visitors to the site are encouraged to respond to an online survey conducted by CERS researchers about the service. So far, 85 percent of those responding indicated SafeRoadMaps had helped raise their awareness about highway safety. More than 75 percent found the new tabbed resources useful. As a result of encouraging responses to date, researchers are planning further enhancements to visualization and analysis tools on the site.

SafeRoadMaps has registered millions of hits since being unveiled in July 2008. The site has attracted international

media attention and is being used in a variety of ways to educate the public about road fatalities.



### CERS survey focuses on seasonal travel awareness

The vast majority of Americans interviewed in a national poll believe winter is the most dangerous time for driving, but the truth is that summer driving is the most perilous, according to the Center for Excellence in Rural Safety (CERS).

In survey findings, CERS researchers discovered that 83 percent of Americans consider winter to be the most dangerous season to be driving on rural roadways. Only 8 percent believe summer is the most dangerous time. However, about one in three fatalities happen during the three months of summer, a significantly higher fatality rate than the winter months, as well as the overall non-summer rate. Moreover, the Fourth of July is often the most dangerous driving day of the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Crowded rural roads and holiday-related drinking are among the many factors that contribute to the danger.

“Americans’ sense of seasonal driving risk is skewed,” said Tom Horan, CERS research director. “We are wary of winter driving, but let our guard down during summer holidays, when fatalities are most likely to occur.”

Rural roads are particularly perilous. While U.S. Census figures show that about 1 out of 5 (21 percent) Americans live

in rural areas, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has found that about 6 out of 10 (57 percent) highway deaths occur on roads that it considers rural.

The survey also found that Americans are overwhelmingly supportive of policies to reduce road fatalities, including many policies considered by public officials and citizens to be too contentious to implement.



A SafeRoadMaps heat map highlights summer hot spots.

## Top 100 summer rural ‘hot spots’ available on SafeRoadMaps

CERS has identified the top 100 summer rural “hot spots,” or the rural areas that have experienced the most fatalities over the past eight years during the summer months. While 32 states have rural areas in the top 100, the states with the most hot spots are (in alphabetical order) Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Because of ties, there are actually 115 hot spots on the top-100 list.

A searchable map showing all of the hot spots is available on the site, and viewers can zoom from a national map view all the way down to a photo of each individual section of the road.

The Google Map-based system allows visitors to enter a zip code, municipality name, or street address and immediately see a map or satellite image of all the road fatalities that have occurred in the chosen area over the past eight years. Details about each individual crash are also available, such as whether the driver was wearing a seat belt, drinking, or

speeding. The tool also notes which life-saving public policies, such as strong seat belt laws, are being employed in the chosen area.



A SafeRoadMaps heat map highlights the top rural summer hot spots.

## About the Center for Excellence in Rural Safety

The Center for Excellence in Rural Safety (CERS) facilitates citizen-centered research, training, and outreach activities related to rural transportation safety. The Center’s research activities explore policy, behavior, and technology innovations through projects addressing safety-conscious planning, ITS and rural emergency response,

integrated policy approaches, and related human factors, societal trends, and stakeholder needs analysis. The Center is a joint program between the State and Local Policy Program at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the Center for Transportation Studies, both at the University of Minnesota, and sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration.

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